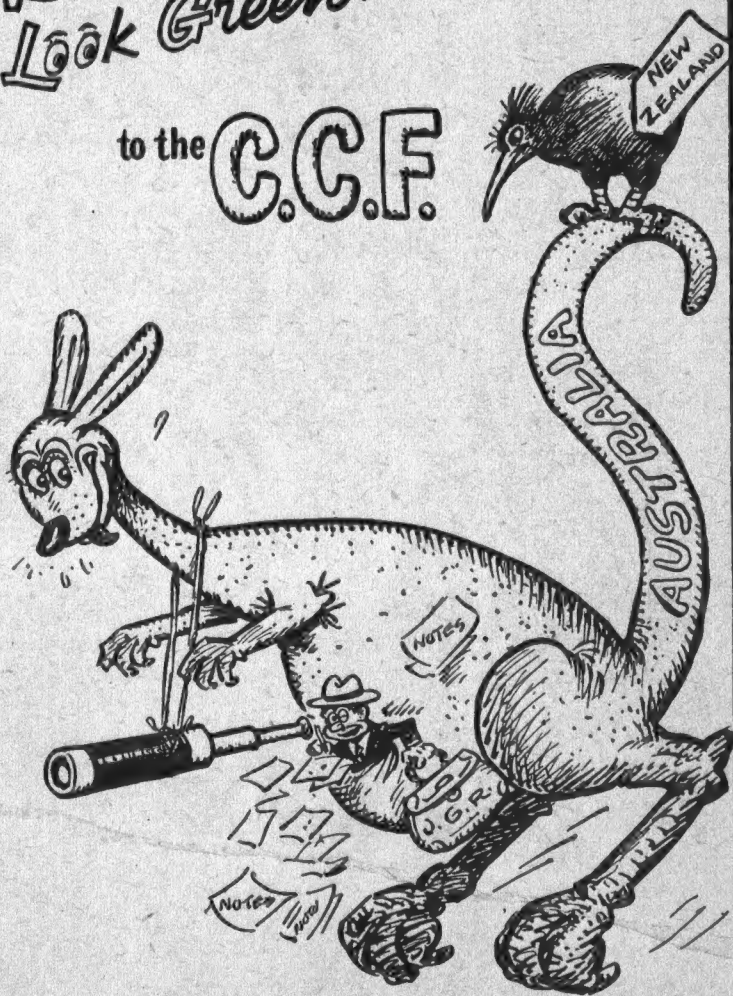


Distant Fields
Look Green...

to the C.C.F.



BY J. GORDON ROSS. M.P.

Printed by Stovel Co. Ltd.
Distributed by Saskatchewan Liberal Association

Report

BY .

J. GORDON ROSS, M.P.

Member of a Canadian Parliamentary
Association Delegation to Australia
and New Zealand



*Every kindness and courtesy was shown us in both
countries, and every facility was accorded us to
make any study that we desired.*

By
J. GORDON ROSS, M.P.

During the summer of 1944, it was my great privilege to be a member of a Canadian Parliamentary Association delegation to visit our sister dominions of Australia and New Zealand. While in both countries we were the guests of the Government. Every kindness and courtesy was shown to us in both countries, and every facility was accorded us to make any study that we desired.

For some years in Canada, there have been many people telling us that we should change our system of Government, that we should take up socialism, and they have pointed to other countries in the world where they claim that people are much happier, that their life is made easier and that they are more prosperous because they have socialist or semi-socialist governments. In each case the countries mentioned are far away. Norway and Sweden have been mentioned, Denmark and Holland, Australia and New Zealand. I, therefore, made up my mind that while I had the opportunity I would gather the facts in order to be able to make a fair comparison between these countries and our own. Being a farmer and representing the centre of the greatest agricultural area in Canada, I naturally spent practically all my time in checking over agricultural conditions in both these countries.

Let me say first of all that I believe the farmers in both Australia and New Zealand are just as patriotic and as willing to do everything in their power to further the Empire's war effort as the Canadian or even the British farmers. But, whereas, British agricultural production has risen by about 70 per cent during the war, and Canadian agricultural production with the loss of 400,000 men and 100,000 women from the farms has increased by 50 per cent since the beginning of the war, agricultural production in both Australia and New Zealand has decreased. In my estimation this is because fair prices are not being paid to the farmer in these two countries for his products and no farmer anywhere can continue to produce if he cannot make production pay.

My first visit to the farming lands of Australia was a trip that I took throughout the dairy country adjacent to Sydney, Australia. My guide was loaned to me by a large producers co-operative system in Sydney which handles about \$40,000,000.00 worth of farmers produce in a year. This man knew many farmers in the area, and I was, therefore, able to meet and interview many of them. I found there that the top price of butter fat was 34 cents per pound, that industrial wages were competing heavily with the farmer, that his mill feeds, bran shorts and middlings and linseed meal were as high or higher than in that year in Canada. That wages for farm help were \$65.00 per month, with board, or higher, that the farmer could not make money at the price of butter, or even at the price of whole milk and that the farmers there were selling their good milk cows at from 35 to 45 dollars per head in our money, while the consumers in Sydney were paying 12¾ cents per quart as against 10 cents in our larger cities.

My next trip into the country was near Newcastle, where we visited some sheep and cattle stations. Here there were fine pasture lands, but I realized that the farmer here had his difficulties as he does with us. All the land had to be fenced with a rabbit fence, a fine mesh about 3 to 4 feet high and buried under the ground several inches. This, of course, greatly increased the cost of pasture lands and then all the land had to be fertilized each year. This operation cost, I was informed, in the neighborhood of from \$1.50 to \$2.00 per acre.

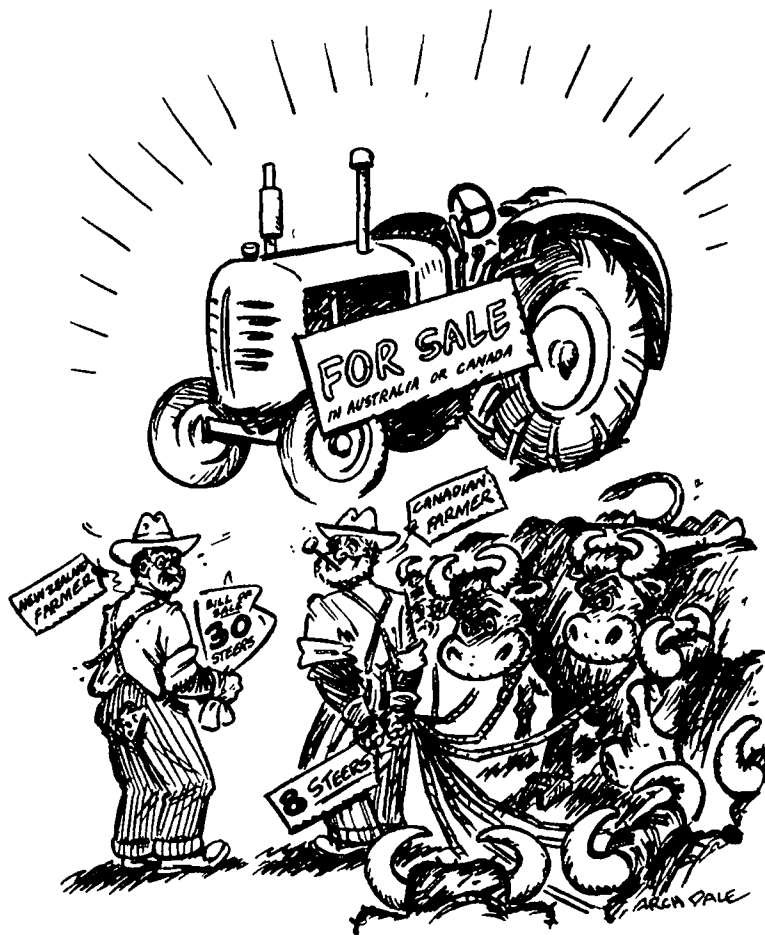
My next trip into the country was out from the Capital, Canberra. The party was taken out to visit a cattle station or ranch on which there were kangaroo in their wild state. It was a very interesting sight secreted in some fallen timber. We waited and watched while three riders from the ranch drove about 100 head of kangaroo in their wild state past us. After viewing this sight we drove down to the ranch house and the owner of the ranch took us out to see his cattle, some especially good Hereford cattle. In one pasture he had a large number of steers weighing about 1,500 pounds. I said to this gentleman "those steers are about ready for market. What do you get for them when you market them?" His answer was, "that is easy, I marketed two carloads last week and I got the best

price that I have had for some time—20 pounds per head.” I figured that out and said to him, “that means \$72.00 in our money.” He immediately questioned me as to the price of similar steers in Canada that day, and I told him that the same steer in Canada, weighing 1,500 pounds would bring \$180.00, on the Winnipeg market. The Australian pound can be bought for \$3.60, Canadian money. We went back to the ranch buildings and there I noticed a tractor of the same make and size that is used on many of our farms, and I questioned him in regard to the price. I found that the tractor cost \$1,620.00 in their money, whereas I know that that tractor cost \$1,189.00 in Regina. Now, some people will say that there is some difference in regard to the exchange, so, therefore, let us figure it out in the actual money that these farmers have. This man’s money was steers. It would take 30 1,200 pound steers to buy that tractor in Australia. It would take exactly 8 of the same kind of steers, weighing 1,200 pounds apiece, to buy that tractor in Regina.

From Canberra, we flew to Melbourne, and from there to the Island State of Tasmania. There we found a fine agricultural country where they grow hundreds of thousands of barrels of the finest eating apples. On account of the war they have been unable to find markets, and these hundreds of thousands of barrels are rotting in Tasmania. No provision has been made, such as in Canada, to look after this crop.

From here we flew back to Melbourne, and over to Mildura, in the desert where a large tract of land is irrigated by the Murray River. Here a large amount of citrus fruit is grown and thousands of tons of dried fruits, raisins and currants, much of which is shipped to Canada.

Our next stop was Adelaide, in South Australia. Here it was my pleasure to drive with the Minister of Public Works and one of the members of the Department of Agriculture, over a very large section of the country. A very interesting system of development is what they call their “reticulation system.” They have thousands of miles of pipe lines carrying water to the farms throughout the area for domestic use and for livestock. The water is delivered at a price too high, of course, for irrigation purposes, but low enough in price so that



The New Zealand farmer must exchange 30 steers for a tractor. The Canadian farmer gets the same tractor for 8 steers.

it is economical for the farmer to purchase for domestic needs and for livestock. A great deal of wheat is grown in this part of Australia, and the long term average yield is about the same as in my part of Western Canada—about 16 bushels to the acre. They grow here very good hard wheat. I enquired of the price and found in our money it would equal 72 cents per bushel for the first 3,000 bags, and 54 cents per bushel for any amount over that. I found in this part of the country they use the same type of machinery as we do and on the one farm I saw an ordinary 8-foot binder, four-horse hitch, and enquired the price thereof. For that make of binder it was \$533.25, as against \$347.50, in Regina, or in other words buying with the farmer's purchasing power it took 740 bushels of wheat in Australia to buy the same binder that could be purchased for 315 bushels, in Regina.

In visiting another farm of a larger type, I found there a tractor identically the same as I had purchased just before leaving for Australia. It was 102G Senior, on rubber wheels, and cost in Regina, \$1,486.00. The same tractor in Australia cost \$2,187.00. In order to purchase this tractor I had to haul in 1,352 bushels of my No. 1 wheat. The Australian farmer had to haul in 3,037 bushels of his good wheat to purchase the same machine. On this farm also was an 8-foot combine, with a power take-off on rubber wheels. It cost the farmer \$2,240.00, the same machine in Regina cost \$1,145.00. The Australian farmer had to deliver 3,111 bushels of wheat, the Regina farmer, 1,040 bushels for the same machine, and yet, these people had been telling me in my country that if the Government went into the implement business we would get machinery cheaper, and I found in Australia, that the Government was in the implement business but the machinery very much dearer.

My next trip into the country was at Alice Springs, which is almost in the centre of Northern Australia. Here is very sparse vegetation, and cattle and sheep are grazed on millions of acres of ranch land. When the cattle get to be five years old they are driven to market 1,000 miles on foot. Each 20 miles there are wells put down by the Government for the



The Canadian Government pays the farmer the maximum price obtainable for his wheat. The Socialistic Government of Australia dictates a price below production cost.

purpose of watering the stock. Naturally, this stock is not in very good shape when it arrives and must be fed up before it is marketed.

Our next stop was near Brisbane, where two Members of Parliament, representing the area, were kind enough to take three of us on a trip through the agricultural part of the country. Here they grow sugar cane, pineapples, bananas, citrus fruits, and have some of the finest dairying lands that I have ever seen. We were particularly interested in the pineapple growing and were shown the system of cultivation from planting to the harvesting of the fruit, and I will always remember that fruit. It was delicious. I enquired as to whether the pineapples were processed in the immediate vicinity, and the farmer told me no that the produce had to be shipped to Brisbane, the closest factory. I noticed they had trucks that brought their pineapples from the field to their packing houses on the farm. I said, of course, you truck them into Brisbane with your trucks. The reply was "no," and upon interrogation I found that the farmer could not truck his produce to the market nor could he truck from the market to his farm but had to truck his produce to the nearest railway point and ship it over the the state-owned railroads and vice versa ship from the market to his nearest railroad station those things which he purchased there. The farmer seemed to think that he was a victim of organized labour there.

In Melbourne we found that there was a great deal of labour trouble in the packing plants, that they were continually having strikes for the purpose of raising wages and lowering hours of work and in some of the plants they were working as little time as 25 to 33 hours per week. I met and talked to the Leader of Farm Organizations, and the Leader of Co-operative Systems. I found these people opposed to socialism, and actually sending out propaganda to their members against socialism.

After leaving Australia, we flew to New Zealand and found it to be beautiful country with an excellent climate. A fine pastoral country where they produce great quantities of dairy products, beef-cattle, sheep and lambs.

New Zealand is essentially an agricultural country. Its farms are not large but they are neat, well kept, with good grass and good stock. There are many co-operative systems in New Zealand, which are well run and these co-operatives handle a great deal of the farmers produce. New Zealand is perhaps more socialistic, even than Australia. They have their Import and Export Boards, and the people of New Zealand pay what the Import Board says they should for those things which they buy. The farmer of New Zealand receives from the Export Board that price which it determines that they shall have for their products. In New Zealand the top price for butter fat is 28 cents per pound, when figured in our money as against 47 cents per pound for a top in Saskatchewan.

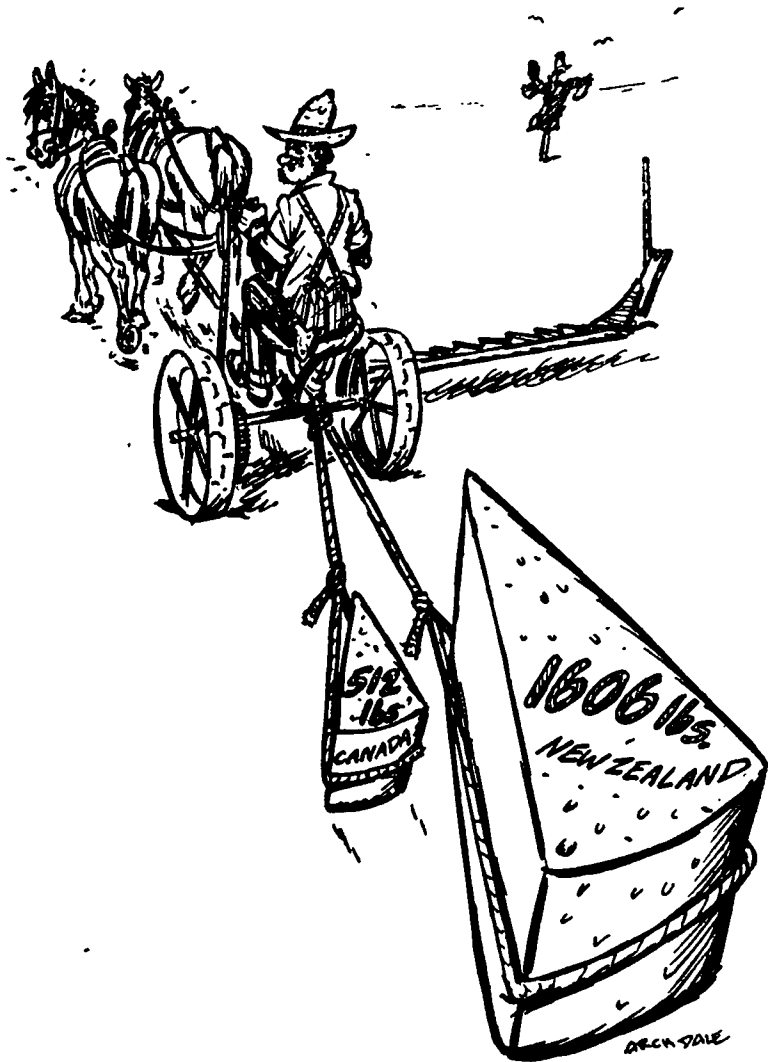
While on a farm there I noticed a well-known cream separator that would handle 450 pounds of milk per hour. I asked the price and found it would be \$94.51 in our money. The same machine could be bought for \$60.50 in Regina. But, again, let us take the purchasing power of the farmer. In order to buy that separator in Regina, the dairy farmer would sell 131 pounds of butter fat. The New Zealand farmer would have to sell 337 pounds of butter fat to purchase the same machine. I found in talking to the farmers that in order to receive the price they now receive for butter fat that they had to agree to minimum wages on the farm and unionized labour on the farm. The minimum wage on New Zealand farms today is \$55.00 per month, with one month's holidays with pay, but the going wage is \$60.00 a month, and when you figure the one month's holidays with pay it would amount to \$65.00 per month, plus board. In other words, a New Zealand dairy farmer has to turn over 232 pounds of butter fat a month to pay his hired man, whereas the Saskatchewan farmer pays out only 141 pounds per month to pay the same wages.

In travelling through the country we stopped in a very flat country called Canterbury Plains. Here we were informed that the finest lamb in the world was raised, Canterbury lamb. These lambs are dressed at about 32 pounds dressed weight, and they bring 13 cents per pound, or \$4.16 per head, in our

money. In Regina, similar lamb, if it could be bought, would bring at least 20 cents per pound, or \$6.40 per head. One thing I noticed in this area was that although fields of mangels and turnips were grown for the livestock, that they were never harvested but the sheep and cattle turned into the field to eat them. When they had eaten these roots down to the level of the ground a heavy harrow was dragged over them in order to bring up the bottom of the root and then the livestock finished them off. I noticed on one of these farms a six-section drag harrow, weighing 60 pounds to the section. I enquired of the price and found that that machine cost \$81.65, in our money. The same machine cost \$48.00, in Regina. It would take $19\frac{1}{2}$ of those excellent Canterbury lambs to buy the drag harrow, but in Regina the farmer would turn over $7\frac{1}{2}$ lambs for the same machine.

We went through some very fine cheese factories in New Zealand, and to my surprise the operators there told me that they considered that Canada produced the finest cheese in the world. The New Zealand farmer received $12\frac{3}{4}$ cents per pound for his cheese as against 24 cents a pound in Canada. On farms, in that area, I enquired of the price of a six-foot mowing machine, and found that it cost \$208.80, in their money, as against \$122.75, in Saskatchewan, and if you want to buy that machine with cheese, the man in New Zealand would pay 1,606 pounds of his cheese, whereas the Canadian producer would turn over 512 pounds of cheese to procure the same machine. In this area of so much dairying, of course they produced many hogs. They laughed at me when I called them hogs over there, because they always call them pigs. A dressed hog, "A" Grade, 160 pounds, is worth \$17.40, in New Zealand; the same hog brings \$30.40, in Regina today. On one of these farms I noticed a one-way disc, six-foot, the price was \$533.25, the same machine in Regina, would cost \$315.75. But again, let us not take money, let us take the produce of the farmer. That one-way disc cost the New Zealand farmer 30 "A" Grade hogs, 160 pounds dressed. In Regina, the farmer paid 15 hogs for the same machine.

While in Wellington, New Zealand, I visited the docks, and I found there that although there were 8 ships in the



The New Zealand farmer must exchange 1,606 pounds of cheese for a 6-foot mowing machine. The Canadian farmer exchanges only 512 pounds of cheese for the same mower.

harbour, loading food for Great Britain, no one was working on the docks. I enquired, and found out that it was because it was drizzling rain a little, and the head of the Union there decided that the men should not work. Therefore, they were sitting in the sheds and being paid by the ship owners. The ship master that I spoke to showed me a seven-ton crane that he had on his ship for discharging cargo. He said to me, "Do you know how much I can lift with that crane? 1,200 pounds is all that the Union will allow me to lift with a seven-ton crane on this dock." He informed me that the dock workers were unionized, had the closed shop and the check-off. The closed shop meant that no one could work on the dock except a member of the Union, and the Union determined whether anyone could join or not. In this case the books had been closed and no further men could join the Union. **I was further informed that these men who were handling the produce of the farmer were receiving as much as \$3,000 to \$3,500 per year, in our money, whereas a farmer who had a large investment in the farm would be lucky if he cleared \$1,000.00 a year, including his work and that of his family.**

Before leaving New Zealand, we met Mr. Peter Fraser, the Premier of New Zealand, and had rather a lengthy discussion with him. A day or two after this Parliament was opened, and Mr. Fraser made a report on the Premiers' Conference in London, the Conference at which Mr. King, of Canada; Mr. Curtin, of Australia; Mr. Smuts, of South Africa; Mr. Fraser, of New Zealand; and Mr. Churchill, of Great Britain, were present. While we were travelling through New Zealand, we had been told by the farmers that Mr. Fraser had negotiated better prices for farm products for New Zealand and they, of course, were anticipating better returns for their produce. One farmer that I met there who had a very fine farm was Mr. S. W. Holland, who is leader of the opposition in New Zealand; in fact all the farmer Members of the House in New Zealand, are in the opposition. They do not believe in and are fighting socialism. While Mr. Fraser was making his report to the House, Mr. Holland interrupted and asked him to inform the country as to what prices the farmers were to procure under the new arrangements that he had negotiated. Mr. Fraser's

reply was to this effect: **"Yes, I have negotiated a better price for farm products for New Zealand, but for some time now the Government has been purchasing farm products through our Boards and paying a set price to the farmers. We shall continue to do that. The increased prices for farm products do not belong to the farmer, they belong to New Zealand, and must be shared by all."** That, of course, is true socialism, and I don't blame the farmers of New Zealand for not believing in it.

We found the people of both these countries to be very fine people. We found that their farm produce was decreasing during wartime, but I am sure there is only one reason for it and that is that the farmer is not receiving a reasonable price for his produce. The old story of producing for use and not for profit may sound all right in theory but it does not work out in practice. I am sorry that every Canadian farmer could not have been with me on this trip.



*The Australian farmer is harassed by rabbits, kangaroos and a
Socialistic Government.*